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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 003028

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SUBJECT: TURKEY WELCOMES NEW IRAQI GOVERNMENT, GOT IRAQ
ENVOY TO GO TO BAGHDAD

REF: BAGHDAD 1572

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C/REL USA, GBR, AUS, CAN) The GOT welcomes the new government in Iraq, and will send its Special Envoy there next week to meet the leadership and invite the Iraqi PM, FonMin, and Speaker of Parliament to Turkey. FonMin Gul hopes to go there "soon." The GOT is maintaining a positive public stance, but is unhappy with the lack of Turkmen representation in the cabinet and what it considers inflammatory statements by Talabani and Barzani. Kirkuk and the PKK will still cloud Turkey's Iraq policy, but we do not see Turkey wavering from its overall positive stance. MFA is working quietly to shift the next Iraq "neighbors meeting" to the margins of the June 19-22 OIC foreign ministers meeting in Baku as opposed to in Tehran. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C/REL USA, GBR, AUS, CAN) GOT Special Envoy for Iraq Oguz Celikkol called in DCM May 23 to inform us of Turkey's next steps now that the Government of Iraq is in place. He handed us a copy of the MFA's statement welcoming the GOI (full text para. 11), noted that Turkey also signed on to the EU's statement to this effect, and reported that he plans to travel to Baghdad May 29 or 30 to meet with GOI leaders and to invite the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Speaker of Parliament to visit Turkey. Celikkol reiterated his request for MNF-I helo support from BIAP to the International Zone and back for his meetings, noting that the Turkish ambassador in Baghdad has advised him not to make this trip by road due to security threats the Turkish embassy has received. Celikkol added that FonMin Gul plans to travel to Baghdad "soon."

We're Happy, But...

[1](#)3. (C/REL USA, GBR, AUS, CAN) Celikkol said that Turkey was putting a positive face on its public comments regarding Iraq, but privately the GOT is displeased that there are no

Turkmen party ministers in the cabinet (he understood one minister from the Shia bloc is a Turkmen). Turkey still hopes that the Turkmen will be represented on the National Security Council (Turkish officials have raised this with us before). DCM countered that while we were not privy to all the calculations Maliki had to make in forming a cabinet, no doubt he had many complex factors to balance in choosing ministers. The fact that amid all these complications Maliki was successfully able to name a cabinet with wide national support was a significant accomplishment. Celikkol took the point.

¶4. (C/REL USA, GBR, AUS, CAN) Celikkol expressed appreciation for S/I Amb. Jeffrey's May 22 remarks on Iraq, especially that the U.S. considered it a top priority to re-start trilateral talks on the PKK now that the GOI is in place. He congratulated Amb. Jeffrey and Amb. Satterfield on their new appointments, and said he would like to invite Amb. Satterfield to visit Ankara.

...Talabani and Barzani Statements Unhelpful

¶5. (C/REL USA, GBR, AUS, CAN) Celikkol was unhappy, however, with recent comments by Iraqi Kurdish leaders. He cited a May 16 press piece in which President Talabani angrily denounced -- and appeared to compare -- Turkish and Iranian interference in Iraq's internal affairs. According to the article, Talabani said that if Turkey wishes to interfere with events in Kirkuk, Iraq could in turn seek to influence events in "Alexandriata," referring to the southern Turkish province of Antakya, which has a significant Arab population.

ANKARA 00003028 002 OF 003

¶6. (C/REL USA, GBR, AUS, CAN) The GOT is also unhappy with KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani's May 7 speech at the KNA, in which he pledged that Kurds will regain the rights taken from them in Mendali, Khanaqin, Kirkuk, Makhmour, Shaikhan, and Sinjar (see reftel). Turkey interprets these remarks to mean that the KRG has territorial designs on these areas. Celikkol handed us maps that showed the current boundaries of the KRG and what these boundaries might look like if the areas Barzani mentioned become part of Kurdistan (we will email these to EUR/SE). Celikkol warned that Kirkuk is a well-known red-line for Turkey. It is also quite possible that if Sinjar were to come under Kurdish control, the KRG area would abut or include Talafar, a Turkmen city of notable interest for Turkey.

Turkey Evaluating How to Deal with KRG

¶7. (S/NF) Celikkol reported that with the Iraqi constitution in effect and the GOI and a united KRG now in place, the GOT is "evaluating relations with the north," i.e., deciding whether to deal officially with the KRG. He highlighted Kirkuk and the PKK's freedom of movement in the north as impediments to improved relations with the KRG, Masoud Barzani in particular. DCM urged Turkey not to link the two issues, and furthermore to talk to Barzani directly to leverage recent discussions between Embassy Baghdad and Barzani on the PKK issue. Celikkol took the point, but emphasized again Turkey's frustration over both issues.

Al-Sadr Visit: Apparently Not Imminent

¶8. (C/REL USA, GBR, AUS, CAN) Celikkol reported that there is still no date set for Moqtada al-Sadr to visit Turkey. He said the GOT had invited him to come some time ago, but al-Sadr has not responded. Celikkol acknowledged our concerns about al-Sadr, but added that with six Sadrists in the Iraqi cabinet Turkey was loathe to alienate him by withdrawing the invitation.

Turkey Maneuvering to Hold Next Neighbors
Meeting in Baku, Not Tehran

¶9. (C/REL USA, GBR, AUS, CAN) Finally, Celikkol noted that Iran has been making preliminary plans to hold an "Iraq neighbors" meeting (Iraq, its immediate neighbors, Egypt, EU, UN, and a few assorted others) at the foreign minister level in Tehran in mid-June. Celikkol reported that there is already an OIC foreign ministers' meeting scheduled for June 19-22 in Baku, and that Turkey is quietly working to hold the neighbors meeting on the sidelines of the OIC ministerial instead of in Tehran.

Comment: The Usual Complaints, but Turkey
Remains Supportive

¶10. (C/REL USA, GBR, AUS, CAN) Comment: Celikkol was open that Turkey will maintain a positive attitude when dealing with Iraq and will continue to support the nascent GOI. But the old nagging issues, Kirkuk and the PKK (and to a less degree, the fate of the Turkmen), will continue to cloud Ankara's thinking and could inhibit cooperation. That said, we have no indication that Turkey is backing off of its commitments to support the new Iraq. END COMMENT.

Text of Turkish MFA statement on Formation of GOI

¶11. (U) BEGIN TEXT (INFORMAL EMBASSY TRANSLATION)

May 22, 2006

ANKARA 00003028 003 OF 003

The government led by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki was established in Iraq on May 20. We wish the new government would be for the good of the Iraqi people.

Following the formation of the new government in Iraq, our Prime Minister and Foreign Minister sent congratulatory messages to their counterparts.

Turkey attaches great importance to the improvement of its relations with Iraq. We are determined to provide utmost support to the government led by Prime Minister al Maliki for its efforts in resolving the political, economic, security, and social problems of Iraq.

END TEXT

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON